



**Vocabulary and Oral Language:  
 The Keys to Comprehension**  
 DIBELS Super Institute and Mentor Summit  
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Ruth Kaminski  
 Dynamic Measurement Group



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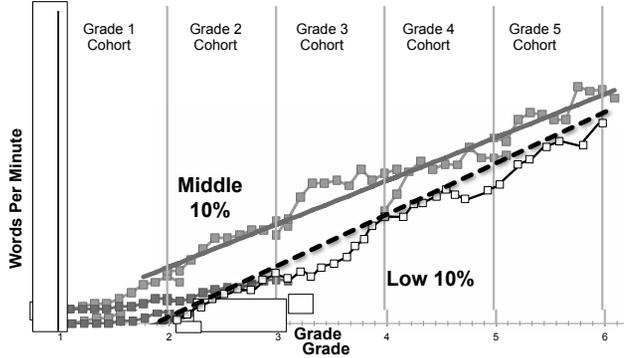


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Need for DIBELS® Change Outcomes

We CAN change reading outcomes for children.



Grade 1 Cohort    Grade 2 Cohort    Grade 3 Cohort    Grade 4 Cohort    Grade 5 Cohort

Words Per Minute

Grade Grade

Middle 10%

Low 10%

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Good, R. H., Simmons, D. C., & Smith, S. B. (1998). Effective academic interventions in the United States: Evaluating and enhancing the acquisition of early reading skills. *School Psychology Review, 27*, 740-753. [Joint publication with *Educational and Child Psychology*]



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Foundational Reading Skills: The Big 5

- Phonemic awareness
- Alphabetic principle and phonics
- Accurate and fluent reading of connected text
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

*Interventions focused on fostering language aren't easy to develop or implement. The interconnected and complex nature of language comes with a long developmental history and draws on a broad range of linguistic and cognitive capacities. – Shanahan & Lonigan, 2012*

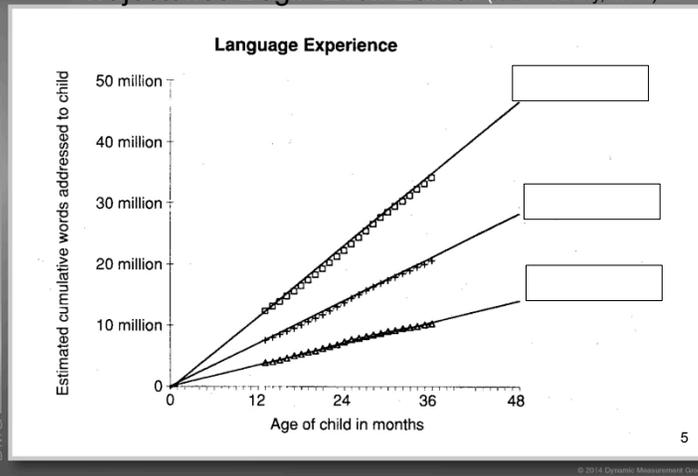
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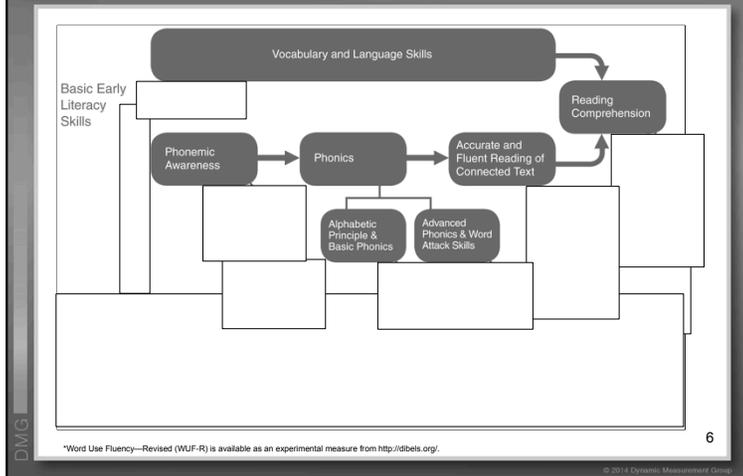
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## The Issue: Differences in Precursors to Reading Trajectories Begin Even Earlier (Hart & Risley, 1995)



## Basic Early Literacy Skills Timeline



## Relationship Between Oral Language and Reading

- ▶ Variations in oral language abilities account for differences in reading comprehension more significant than age, nonverbal ability or non-word reading (Nation & Snowling 2004)
- ▶ Strong link between development of oral language and the development of phonological awareness (Dickinson et al., 2003; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998)
- ▶ Decoding skills are supported by vocabulary, syntactic and semantic understandings (Share, 1999)
- ▶ Contribution of different aspects of oral language to reading varies at different stages of reading development and with readers of different abilities (Roth, Speece, & Cooper, 2002)



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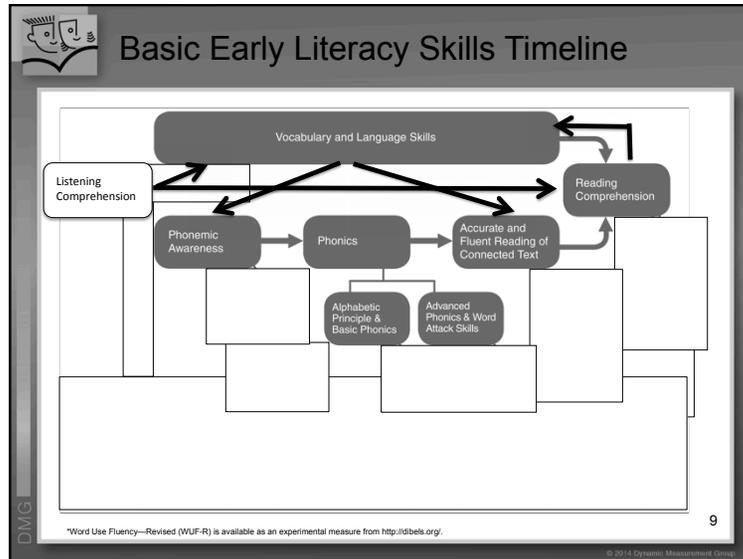


- ▶ In early grades, reading comprehension depends heavily on emerging word-reading skills.
- ▶ As children accomplish the ability to automatically and fluently read printed words, language comprehension begins to contribute more to individual differences in reading comprehension.
- ▶ Those with poor word-reading abilities (i.e., poor decoders) lag behind their typically developing peers on reading comprehension measures in the early grades, even if they have good language development. However, those with poor language comprehension, in spite of relatively proficient word-reading ability, usually do not lag behind their typically developing peers on reading comprehension tests until they have had one or two years of reading instruction (Catts et al., 2005).



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- ### Language Skills
- ▶ Sounds in words (phonology)
  - ▶ Meaning of words (vocabulary/ semantics)
  - ▶ Knowledge of word parts (morphology)
  - ▶ Order of words and relationship of words in sentences (syntax)
  - ▶ Purpose/function (pragmatics)
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### Children who comprehend well go beyond word and sentence comprehension to construct a representation of the situation or state of affairs described by the text.

*In some theories, this is referred to as a “mental model” and it involves organizing a text’s multiple ideas into an integrated whole, using both information from the text and the reader’s own world knowledge.*

*To do this, successful comprehenders draw upon a set of higher-level cognitive and linguistic skills, including inferencing, monitoring comprehension, and using text structure knowledge.*

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- ### Reading Comprehension Skills
- ▶ Knowledge and skills necessary for text integration and coherence
    - ✦ Knowledge of narrative and expository text structure
    - ✦ Knowledge and understanding of linguistic cohesive devices
  - ▶ Verbal reasoning/cognitive skills
    - ✦ Comprehension monitoring
    - ✦ Ability to make inferences
    - ✦ Critical thinking
  - ▶ Background knowledge
  - ▶ Working memory
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## How to Advance Reading Comprehension

Begin with listening comprehension

- ▶ Shared book reading with young children
  - ✦ Dialogic reading strategies
  - ✦ Repeated readings
  - ✦ Story Retellings
- ▶ Read to students at *all* ages

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## How to Advance Reading Comprehension

Explicitly teach vocabulary

- Select corpus of words to teach
- Select words
- Teach new words
  - Teach definitions explicitly
  - Provide repeated exposure to new words
  - Provide opportunities to use new vocabulary words

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## How to Advance Reading Comprehension

- Teach morphology
  - Teach morphology in the context of rich, explicit vocabulary instruction
  - Teach the underlying knowledge about morphemes and transforming words
  - Teach students to use morphology as a cognitive strategy with explicit steps

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## How to Advance Comprehension

Build word consciousness

- ▶ *Getting students interested in and excited about words is a crucial component of effective literacy programs.* (Graves & Watts-Taffe 2008)
  - ▶ Create a word-rich environment
  - ▶ Recognize and promote adept use of words in speech
  - ▶ Promote wordplay
  - ▶ Teach students about words

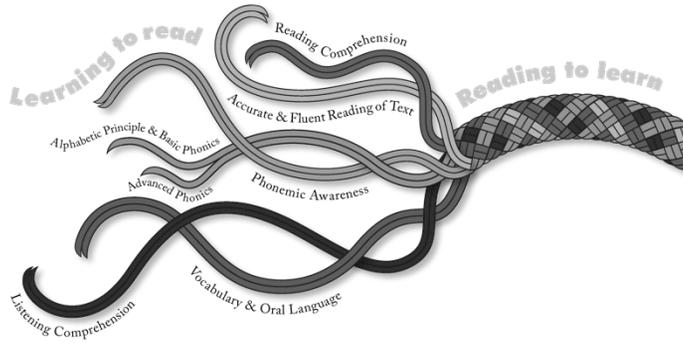
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# Basic Early Literacy Skills: Strands



Adapted from Scarborough, 2001 and Kame'uli, Simmons, Catts, & Hogg, 2003

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## Remember:

The more that you read,  
the more things you will know.  
The more that you learn,  
the more places you'll go.

Dr. Seuss



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